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RUEHZN/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 3052
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5639
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 1089
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0752
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0282
RUEHSUN/USUN ROME IT
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 1432
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//USDP/ISA/AP//
RHMFISS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC//J2/J3/J5//
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-3//
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J00/J2/J3/J5//
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HANOI 000073

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS, EAP/EP, INR, OES/STC, OES/IHA, MED
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE AND GH
STATE PASS TO HHS/OGHA (WSTIEGER, EELVANDER AND ABHAT)
USDA PASS TO APHIS
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FOR OSD/ISA/AP (LSTERN)
BANGKOK FOR RMO, CDC, USAID (JMACARTHUR AND MBRADY)
ROME FOR FAO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [AMED](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [EAGR](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [VM](#)
SUBJECT: VIETNAM - AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

REF: A) HO CHI MINH 10 B) 06 HCMC 1497 AND PREVIOUS

11. (SBU) Summary. There have been no reported H5N1 human avian influenza (AI) cases in Vietnam this year and none reported in 2006. According to the Government of Vietnam (GVN), Kien Giang province in the Mekong Delta has become the fourth province to experience to an AI poultry outbreak. Two flocks of ducks in two separate districts of Kien Giang Province perished over the weekend, with all 70 ducks reportedly tested positive for H5N1. The GVN, with close support from international experts from FAO and WHO, are closely monitoring the situation and, while concerned that future outbreaks may occur, believe that they have a handle on the poultry outbreaks in the south. End Summary.

12. (U) There have been no confirmed H5N1 AI human cases in Vietnam this year and none reported in 2006.

Poultry Outbreaks Continue in Mekong Delta Provinces

13. (SBU) According to Thanh Nien News dated January 9, Kien Giang province in the Mekong Delta has become the fourth Vietnamese province to report an AI poultry outbreak. According to local animal health officials, 70 ducks in two flocks from Go Quao and Vinh Thuan districts died on Saturday and Sunday. Subsequently, all birds tested positive for H5N1. Local authorities have slaughtered approximately 1,800 ducks and have quarantined and sterilized

infected sites in the two districts.

Since December 11, 2006, AI outbreaks have been officially reported in 41 communes in 17 districts of Ca Mau, Bac Lieu, Hau Giang and Kien Giang provinces and nearly 45,000 poultry have been culled.

(NOTE: On January 11, a senior official in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's (MARD) Department of Animal Health confirmed to Health Attache that the poultry die-off in Can Tho Province, as reported -- reftel A, have tested negative for H5N1. END NOTE)

GVN Aware Of Virus Circulating Among Unvaccinated Poultry

¶4. (U) At a meeting of the National Steering Committee on Avian Flu Control in Hanoi on January 10, Vice Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Bui Ba Bong warned officials and the press that the spread of AI in poultry remains an imminent threat to all localities, especially in the Mekong delta but also in central and northern regions. After the meeting, Vice Minister Bong stated to Vietnam News that the GVN is dispatching 11 inspection teams throughout the country to ensure prevention activities such as vaccinations and quarantines are conducted properly. In addition, the Ministry of Health has reportedly established five mobile emergency task forces to support localities in the prevention and treatment of possible human infections.

¶5. (U) State media have cited reports by the Animal Health Bureau Region Number 7 and the Center for Animal Health Diagnosis that samples from unvaccinated ducks in Dong Thap, Bac Lieu and Vinh Phuc Provinces in the south and Ninh Binh and Ha Nam Provinces in the north have also tested positive for H5N1 virus. State media also reported that vaccination rates are as low as 50 percent in some Mekong Delta provinces and as low as 39 percent in central provinces such as Quang Ngai and Quang Nam. Thanh Nien news further reported poultry deaths in Dai Loc District of Quang Nam Province. Samples were not collected from those birds since breeders had quickly

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burned and buried the carcasses.

Assessment of High Risk Threats

¶6. (SBU) At a USG partners meeting held January 9 at USAID Hanoi office, Dr. Jeffrey Gilbert, Avian Influenza Senior Technical Coordinator of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), expressed hope that Vietnam is "past the peak" of the recent flurry of outbreaks, which occurred primarily in illegally hatched duck flocks that were not vaccinated or monitored by local authorities. Regarding procedure, samples that have tested positive by the animal health regional laboratory in Can Tho are confirmed by the HCMC Pasteur Institute and then some material is sent via FAO coordination to a reference laboratory in Australia for sequencing.

¶7. (SBU) Dr. Gilbert further noted that the GVN is concerned that other provinces, particularly the central provinces of Thanh Hoa, Quang Binh and Quang Nam pose a high risk for AI outbreaks in poultry. While these areas remain outbreak-free, the heightened concern stems from earlier surveys that found significant levels of H5N1 genetic materials in poultry flocks in these areas. For example, officials have cited that 73 percent of 30 unvaccinated poultry samples collected in Quang Nam Province in December 2006 tested positive for H5N1 virus, which is alarming considering that in provinces such as Quang Nam, 60 percent or more of poultry flocks remain unvaccinated. Another risk factor that concerns officials is the highly organized and profuse trafficking of live poultry across the border from China, which supplies not only border provinces but the large metropolitan cities.

¶8. (SBU) Dr. Mark Simmerman, a CDC epidemiologist seconded to the World Health Organization office in Hanoi, provided a brief update on suspect human AI cases. He noted that all four members of the family in the Mekong Delta, who tested negative by throat swab test, recovered quickly and did not require mechanical breathing support. Dr. Simmerman also noted that the media attention on AI may have contributed to the increased number of cases (20-30 cases per day)

referred for testing in northern Vietnam, all of which have tested negative and have not garnered media attention.

USG IEC Activities

9. (SBU) On January 9, a monthly USG partners meeting was held at USAID Hanoi office that was attended by twenty persons, including personnel from the Embassy, implementing partners, FAO and WHO. After a brief update on AI outbreaks (see above), representatives of various USG-funded projects shared with the group their work on Information, Education and Communications (IEC) activities. These include TV spots created by Academy for Educational Development (AED) that focus on village/community spirit and not disrupting village harmony through bad poultry practices. CARE and Abt Associates have developed posters and booklets that target best practices for market and food stall workers. Meanwhile, Agronomes & Veterinaires Sans Frontieres (AVSF) is developing two new training manuals, one on epidemiology and the other on diagnosis of AI in poultry, and Kenan Institute sub-grantees Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific Limited (AFAP) will be developing public-private partnerships with Vietnamese companies in Thanh Hoa, Nghe An and Hoa Binh provinces of northern Vietnam to develop improved bio-security standards.

10. (SBU) COMMENT: The GVN, with close support from international

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experts from FAO and WHO, are closely monitoring the situation and, while concerned that future outbreaks may occur, believe that they have a handle on the poultry outbreaks in the south. The central government appears to be doing everything within their power to contain the spread of poultry outbreaks that are occurring in unvaccinated poultry flocks, including reprimanding district-level officials, supplying needed technical and financial support to outbreak districts and preventing future outbreaks in poultry by ordering all ministries and provinces to maintain vigilance with regards to farm hygiene, strict enforcement of the ban on live poultry markets and early reporting of outbreaks. Post has encouraged the WHO and FAO to conduct a joint field assessment in the Mekong Delta, which is currently underway after some deliberation of the GVN, and the HHS Health Attaché has reached out to national and international health organizations with offers of technical support if needed. END COMMENT.

MARINE